

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 PA-02 H-02
SSM-05 SIG-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 SP-02 INRE-00 /070 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/P:WHARRIS:RGH
APPROVED BY NEA/P:REUNDELAND
S/PRS - MR. CARTER
H - MR. FLATEN
SSM - MR. MC ANDREW
NEA/IAI - MR. SMITH
NEA/EGY - MR. NEWBERRY
NEA/ARN - MR. DRAPER
NEA/ARP - MR. TWINAM

-----123235 230124Z /72

O 222356Z FEB 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION SINAI
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
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USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

USCINCEUR
DOD
JCS
CIA
USIA
NSC

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CINCEUR FOR POLAD, TEL AVIV FOR PAO, DELIVER BY 9 A.M.

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - FEBRUARY 22

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE
EXCERPTS FROM DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING FOR FEBRUARY 22,
1978. FYI ONLY, SPOKESMAN TODAY WAS HODDING CARTER III.

Q. THERE IS A STORY IN THE "WASHINGTON POST" THIS
MORNING ABOUT A PLO INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIRE FIGHT BETWEEN
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WOULD-BE EGYPTIAN COMMANDOS AND THE CYPRIOT FORCES.
DOES THE UNITED STATES KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A PLO INVOLVE-
MENT AND IF NOT NECESSARILY IN THE FIGHT, ABOUT PLO
INVOLVEMENT AT ALL IN THE TERRORIST EVENT?

A. WE HAVE SEEN THAT REPORT THAT WAS IN THE PAPER THIS
MORNING. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING INDEPENDENTLY TO VERIFY
THAT REPORT.

Q. AGAIN, THE REPORT, OF COURSE, SPEAKS OF --

A. -- OF AN ELITE UNIT, A 12-MAN UNIT FIGHTING ON THE
TARMAC AND THAT SORT OF THING. I HAVE NOTHING ON THAT.

Q. YOU HAVE NOTHING ON LESSER INVOLVEMENT EITHER, DO YOU?

A. ONLY ON THE AFFILIATION OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED?
AGAIN, WE HAVE CONFLICTING REPORTS AND WE ARE IN NO
BETTER SHAPE TODAY, AS FAR AS BEING ABLE TO PROVIDE
AN IDENTIFICATION, THAN WE WERE YESTERDAY, PRECISELY
WHO THEY MAY BE CONNECTED WITH.

Q. BUT THE ROOT QUESTION THAT I HAD IN MIND ANYHOW, WAS
THE PLO COOPERATING WITH THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT OR
INVOLVED WITH THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT?

A. I APPRECIATE THE QUESTION. ALL I'M SAYING IS, I

DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO CONFIRM THAT IDEA OR THEIR INVOLVEMENT AT THIS TIME.

Q. I HAVE SOME QUESTIONS ON THAT PLEASE. PERHAPS YOU COULD TAKE THEM. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION THAT CYPRUS IS A GUN-RUNNING BASE FOR THE PLO AND HAS BEEN RUNNING ARMS FOR SOME TIME? DO YOU HAVE ANY STATEMENT ON THAT?

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A. YOU BETTER START GIVING ME QUESTIONS BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT.

Q. COULD YOU PLEASE LOOK INTO THAT BECAUSE THERE ARE REPORTS THAT IT HAS BEEN A GUN-RUNNING BASE FOR THE PLO FOR QUITE A TIME. AND ALSO WOULD YOU LOOK INTO WHETHER CYPRUS HAS EVER GIVEN REFUGE TO TERRORIST GROUPS?

A. LET'S DEFINE WHAT YOU MEAN THERE.

Q. THIS ALL TIES IN WITH THE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHETHER THE CYPRIOT OFFICIALS WERE GOING TO GIVE PASSPORTS TO PALESTINIANS AND HELP THEM IN THEIR ESCAPE. COULD YOU LOOK INTO THAT, TOO? DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT POINT?

A. I WILL TAKE THESE QUESTIONS. AS TO HOW MUCH I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO GET YOU, I DON'T KNOW.

Q. DOES A REPORT LIKE THIS BOTHER YOU OR THE STATE DEPARTMENT? DO YOU CHECK ON IT? DO YOU CHECK WITH THE CYPRUS GOVERNMENT AND WITH OTHER SOURCES TO SION BEING IS IT TRUE? IN OTHER WORDS, IS THERE ANY ACTION BEING TAKEN NOW CONNECTED WITH THAT REPORT?

A. I HAVE NO IDEA.

Q. I THINK WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO GET AT HERE IS WHETHER THE GREEK-CYPRIOT GOVERNMENT WAS TRYING TO SHIELD THE TERRORIST BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T WANT TO ENDANGER MONEY THAT THEY HAVE ALLEGEDLY BEEN MAKING FROM GUN-RUNNING ACTIVITIES.

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Q. HOW COME THEY ARE ACCUSING ONLY THE PLO? HOW DID THEY IDENTIFY THEM--FROM THE KALISHNIKOV MACHINE GUN OR WHAT, SINCE THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN CYPRUS HAS THE SAME GUN?

A. THAT IS WHY THIS MAKES THE DISCUSSION VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME.

Q. IN A CASE LIKE THIS, WOULD THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ASK THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRUS ABOUT SUCH A REPORT?

A. I WOULD DOUBT THAT THERE WOULD BE ANY KIND OF OFFICIAL REQUEST THAT WOULD GO OUT ON A REPORT LIKE THIS IN WHICH THE DIRECT IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WERE A LITTLE OBSCURE, JUST TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST ABOUT IT.

Q. WHAT ABOUT UNOFFICIAL?

A. YOU KNOW THE VARIOUS WAYS THAT WE TALK TO VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS.

Q. SO, YOU DO CHECK IT?

A. I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT WE'VE DONE IN THIS SPECIFIC CASE, BUT IT'S NOT THE NORMAL THING. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, POLITICAL OFFICERS AND OTHERS ARE, OBVIOUSLY, INTERESTED IN WHAT GOES ON IN THE COUNTRIES IN WHICH THEY LIVE.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS SUPPLIED EGYPT WITH DOLS 1.5 BILLION WORTH OF ARMS SINCE THE '73 WAR?

A. NO. ON THAT, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO CHANGE IN WHAT WE WERE SAYING TO YOU LAST YEAR--I SUPPOSE THIS REFERS UNCLASSIFIED

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TO THE JACK ANDERSON COLUMN THIS MORNING--AND WE ARE IN THE SAME STANCE THAT WE HAVE BEEN THAT, OBVIOUSLY, THERE IS NO SECRET THAT THEY HAD A DIRECT ARMS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION, AND THAT WAS ACKNOWLEDGED FOR A LONG TIME; ALSO, THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WAS A LIMITED SOVIET SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP FOR SOME TIME FOLLOWING THE OCTOBER '73 WAR, AS WELL AS IN

ARMS.

HOWEVER, AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, FROM ABOUT MID-'76 ON, WE HAVE HAD NO INFORMATION OF SIGNIFICANT SOVIET EQUIPMENT REACHING EGYPT. THE EMBARGO ON SUCH A SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WAS INITIATED, I MIGHT ADD, BY THE SOVIET UNION, AND TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE, IT HAS NOT BEEN LIFTED.

Q. WOULD YOU QUARREL WITH THE FIGURE OF DOLS 1.5 BILLION

SINCE BETWEEN '73 AND NOW?

A. I DON'T HAVE THE TOTAL OF EXACTLY HOW MUCH. BUT WE CERTAINLY CONCEDE THERE WAS A SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WHICH INVOLVED MATERIEL WHICH WAS WAR MATERIEL.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY CONFIRMATION TO THE ACTUAL BREAKDOWN THAT JACK ANDERSON GIVES ON THE PLANES AND TANKS AND ALL?

A. NO, I DON'T, AND I DOUBT THAT I WILL.

Q. ON SUPPLIES TO EGYPT, DO WE STILL CONSIDER C-130'S TO BE NON-LETHAL EQUIPMENT WHEN THEY ARE USED TO CARRY COMMANDOS AROUND FOR RAIDS? HOW DO YOU DISTINGUISH WHAT'S LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL? I'M CONFUSED AGAIN.
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A. I CAN DODGE AROUND ON THIS. THERE ARE HIGHLY ARBITRARY DISTINCTIONS, WHICH IN THE REAL WORLD OF EQUIPMENT DON'T MAKE TOO MUCH SENSE; AND, OBVIOUSLY, THERE IS HARDLY ANYTHING WHICH IS SUPPLIED IN THIS FIELD WHICH CAN'T, IN SOME WAY OR ANOTHER, BE USED IN A LETHAL WAY. IT IS THE DISTINCTION WHICH IS USED, AND I CAN GIVE YOU SOME SONG AND DANCE ON IT, BUT IT IS SIMPLY A CATEGORY WHICH IS SELF-DEFIANT.

Q. SINCE YOU'RE CHECKING ON SOME THINGS IN RELATION TO ARMS AND JACK ANDERSON AND SO ON, WOULD YOU ALSO LOOK INTO WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS STILL SOVIET ARMED MILITARY PEOPLE IN EGYPT HAVING SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT OR ADVISING IN ANY WAY, OR MAINTAINING EQUIPMENT, AND SO ON?

A. YOU MEAN IN A MILITARY RELATIONSHIP TO THEIR ARMED FORCES.

Q. IN A MILITARY RELATIONSHIP, AS OF NOW.

A. I DON'T KNOW OF ANY, BUT I'LL SEE.

Q. WELL, PRESUMING THAT THERE WERE SOME, WOULD THAT AFFECT OR CHANGE THE RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE UNITED STATES PRESENTLY, OR THE ARMS SALES TO EGYPT?

A. I WOULD ASSUME WE OPERATE UNDER INFORMATION THAT WE HAVE, AND THAT NO, WE HAVE DECIDED, FOR GOOD AND SUFFICIENT REASONS, TO PUT FORWARD THAT PARTICULAR ARMS THING.

Q. CAN YOU ELABORATE FURTHER ON THE SECRETARY'S COMMENT YESTERDAY ABOUT THE PACKAGE DEAL ON THE THREE COUNTRIES GETTING EQUIPMENT?

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A. NO. I DONT THINK I NEED TO. I THOUGHT IT WAS FAIRLY CLEAR. AND IT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

Q. BUT DOES THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDER THE PROJECTED SALE OF THE 60 F-15S TO SAUDI ARABIA AS IN PART A BALANCE WITH THE ISRAELI ARMS REQUIREMENTS?

A. I THINK THAT THE NOTION OF THE ENTIRE PACKAGE IS THAT, TAKEN AS A WHOLE, IT DOES NOT AFFECT THE BALANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THAT THEREFORE, THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION IS, YES, THAT IS THAT THE JUSTIFICATION FOR ANY, RELIES UPON THE JUSTIFICATION FOR ALL, THAT IF YOU HAVE A POLICY IN WHICH YOU ARE NOT GOING TO DISTURB THE BALANCE IN A REGION BY AN ARMS SALE, THEN IF YOU COME FORWARD WITH SOMETHING WHICH, AS THIS ONE DOES, INCLUDES A NUMBER OF FACTORS, THE ANSWER IS YES.

Q. THE REASON I ASK IS THAT IN THE PAST WHEN THEY HAVE HAD ARGUMENTS OVER THE BALANCE OF POWER IT USED TO BE THE BALANCE WAS ISRAEL AND THE CONFRONTATION STATES. THE ISRAELIS, IN FACT, USED TO ARGUE THAT IT SHOULD BE BROADER TO INCLUDE OTHER COUNTRIES. DOES THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDER, THEN, THAT ANY ARMS THAT IT MIGHT SUPPLY TO SAUDI ARABIA HAVE TO BE FIGURED INTO THE POTENTIAL FOR THE CONFRONTATION STATES?

A. NO. EACH ONE OF THESE HAS A RATIONALE WHICH WAS GONE THROUGH LAST WEEK.

Q. YOU SEE, I CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHY, IF SAUDI ARABIA DID NOT GET THE ARMS REQUESTED FOR SAUDI ARABIA, IT WOULD AFFECT THE BALANCE AS IT AFFECTS ISRAEL.
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A. NO. I THINK IT WOULD, HOWEVER, HAVE A MATERIAL EFFECT ON SAUDI ARABIA'S OWN SENSE OF SECURITY; IT WOULD ALSO HAVE A PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT WHICH ALSO FIGURES INTO THE OVERALL BALANCE AND SENSE OF HOW THINGS STAND IN THE REGION. BUT INsofar AS INDIVIDUAL JUSTIFICATION FOR EACH PART OF THE PACKAGE, THAT WAS GONE INTO AT SOME LENGTH LAST WEEK.

Q. IT SEEMS TO ME TO BE MORE OF A POLITICAL BALANCE THAN A STRATEGIC BALANCE. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU SEEM TO BE SAYING YOU WANT TO BE GOOD TO BOTH EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, AND ISRAEL. IF YOU CUT ONE, THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD LOSE ITS EVEN-HANDEDNESS IN KIND OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL, POLITICAL WAY.

A. I THINK PRETTY WELL, ALL THE REASONING THAT GOES INTO THIS PACKAGE WAS GONE INTO THIS PACKAGE WAS GONE INTO AT GREAT LENGTH. I DON'T HAVE MUCH TO ADD TO IT FROM WHAT WAS SAID LAST WEEK AND WHAT WAS SAID YESTERDAY BY THE SECRETARY.

Q. IN ANY OF THE MIDDLE EAST DIPLOMACY HAS A PLAN SURFACED, A PROPOSAL, A SUGGESTION OF BUILDING AN AMERICAN AIR BASE IN THE SINAI AS A WAY OF GETTING AROUND THE PROBLEM BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL?

A. I KNOW OF NO SUCH PLAN.

Q. YOU'VE HEARD NO DISCUSSION OF THAT SORT OF THING?

A. I HAVE NOT HEARD OF ANY SUCH DISCUSSION. I HAVEN'T EVEN READ ANYTHING ABOUT IT, LET ALONE HEARD ABOUT IT. I MEAN, I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING.

Q. IT WAS IN "U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT."
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A. I RECOGNIZE THERE ARE SOURCES FOR QUESTIONS, BUT I DON'T HAVE ANY SOURCE FOR THE ANSWER.

Q. WOULD YOU ELABORATE A LITTLE BIT WHEN YOU SAID THE PLANES FOR SAUDI ARABIA HAVE A MILITARY EFFECT ON SAUDI ARABIA AND ALSO A PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON HOW THINGS STAND IN THE REGION. WHAT COUNTRIES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT IN TERMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT?

A. I'M TALKING ABOUT ITS OWN PSYCHOLOGY AND ITS OWN SENSE OF SECURITY IN THE SENSE THAT IT HAS A

RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE WHO WILL MEET THE NEEDS, AS THEY UNDERSTAND THEM TO EXIST FOR THEIR OWN SELF DEFENSE.

Q. YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT EGYPT AND SYRIA AND JORDAN IN THIS CONNECTION OR JUST SAUDI ARABIA?

A. I'M TALKING ABOUT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE PACKAGE.

Q. IN OTHER WORDS, THE WAY IT'S EXPLAINED, IF SAUDI ARABIA DOES NOT GET THESE PLANES, EGYPT WILL FEEL THAT IT'S IN A LESS CAPABLE POSITION DEFENSIVELY?

A. NO.

Q. OR OFFENSIVELY?

A. NO. I WAS TALKING ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA UNIQUELY, OR ISRAEL UNIQUELY, OR EGYPT UNIQUELY INsofar AS THEIR OWN SENSE OF SECURITY WAS CONCERNED.
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Q. WOULD ALL MILITARY SALES TO THE MIDDLE EAST BE SHAPED ON A PACKAGE DEAL LIKE THIS ONE?

A. I DON'T THINK THAT I WOULD WISH TO MAKE SUCH A PREDICTION AT ALL. I WOULD SIMPLY SAY THAT THIS DECISION WAS MADE AS A PACKAGE. WE HAVE, IN THE HISTORY OF THIS ADMINISTRATION, MADE DECISIONS IN THAT AREA WHICH WERE NOT PART OF A PACKAGE, AS YOU KNOW, LEBANON SPECIFICALLY.

VANCE

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